

THE LITURGY AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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THE LITURGY AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

by

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PREFACE

THE following chapters are a summary of lectures delivered in the summer of 1954 at a Clergy Refresher School, conducted at the Central Theological College, Tokyo, and at a conference for clergy and missionaries of the Diocese of Victoria, Hong Kong. These conferences were made possible through the generosity of the Overseas Division of the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the trustees of the Central Theological College, and the Bishop of Hong Kong, the Right Reverend Ronald O. Hall.

A Japanese version of the lectures was published in Tokyo in 1956, through the efforts of the Reverend Shunji F. Nishi, PH.D., sometime Dean of the Central Theological College. At the same time, the Bishop of Hong Kong made them available through his Diocesan Press. The author is grateful to Bishop Hall for his kind permission in allowing this new edition to be made for circulation in the Western provinces of the Church.


It is hoped that these lectures may serve as useful outlines for parochial and diocesan study groups that desire a better comprehension of the treasures of faith and worship enshrined in our liturgical heritage.

MASSEY H. SHEPHERD, JR.


Berkeley, California.
July 1956.

I

THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT

ONE of the most significant trends in Christendom to-day is what is commonly called The Liturgical Movement. It is a revival of Christian corporate worship, a profound interest in the origins and meanings of the Church's historic forms and practices of worship, and a concern for their relevance to the problems of our contemporary world. 

The Liturgical Movement is not organized. It has no central commission, or authoritative body, that directs it. It is a ferment like leaven. It is at work in all Christian Churches—in greater degree in some communions than in others. But those who are deeply interested in it are not confined to the Churches that use fixed liturgical forms of a historic lineage.

In recent years the Liturgical Movement has come to be more closely allied to the Ecumenical Movement. This is inevitable, not only because the Liturgical Movement is at work in all Christian bodies but because it is concerned with a most fundamental aspect of Christian corporate life. Indeed, corporate worship is central in any truly Christian way of life. And it may be said that the worship of any particular group of Christian people more nearly reflects its apprehension of the Christian faith than any other activity. There is an old saying that "the law of prayer is the law of belief". To understand truly what men believe, we must examine their worship. 

Thus it is becoming increasingly clear that the more the separated Christian bodies come to understand and appreciate their several "ways of worship", the more nearly they will come to understand one another's basic conception of Christianity itself. Since "intercommunion" is the real goal of all ecumenical endeavour, it is obvious that only an

agreement as to the meaning and practice of Christian worship, especially as regards its sacramental worship, will bring this goal towards any kind of realization.

Much attention has already been devoted in the Ecumenical Movement to the differences of the Churches in their confessional standards of faith, and their various forms of ecclesiastical polity and ministerial order. These matters are by no means unimportant. But they are not the basic reasons for the disunity of Christians in actual fact. The heart of these differences finds its expression in the several ways in which they are expressed in worship.

On the one hand, there is a large number of Christian Churches in which corporate worship is centred in the preaching of the Word, and the celebration of the sacraments is made subordinate to the proclamation of the Word. In others, however, the sacraments themselves are central in the worship of the Church, and preaching is made a secondary or, at least, a less important element in public worship. Another major difference among the Churches lies in their use, or lack of use, respectively, of fixed forms of worship. Related to this difference is the variant conception of the Ministry that presides over worship, whether the prophetic or the priestly type of ministry is stressed and valued.

There is, however, another side to this picture. Often Churches share in common elements of worship, which their several members can readily understand; but behind these apparent unities lie divergent theological interpretations. So much of public worship, in all Churches, is either taken directly from the Scriptures or is based upon the Bible, that it is easy for Christians to share with one another in many acts of common worship, in psalm and hymn, in lesson, and in prayer.

A Roman Catholic, an Anglican, and a Lutheran, for example, can understand a common structure underlying their respective liturgies of the Eucharist. In fact, they can largely accept the texts of these liturgies, taken by themselves. Yet each of these communions has placed upon its liturgy certain theological meanings that are sources of

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serious disagreement; the nature of the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament, the sacrificial character of the sacrament, and the significance of the ministry that celebrates the sacrament.

Ever since its formation, the World Council of Churches has had a Commission on Ways of Worship, one of the commissions working under the larger framework of its study groups in Faith and Order. Since the meeting of the Council in Evanston in 1954, this Commission has been divided into three groups: one for the Far East, one for Europe, and one for America. To date, the Commission has studied the varieties of worship in the several Christian Churches, and in this endeavour it has enjoyed some co-operation from the Roman Catholics. It has not, however, penetrated very deeply into the underlying theological problems of worship; nor has it concerned itself very much with the historical origins and sources of our differences in worship. The work of the Commission on Ways of Worship has been severely criticized for dealing only with the outer differences of the Churches, with what has been called the "phenomenology" of worship. A selection of its studies was published under the title *Ways of Worship*. From this volume, however, it is clear that certain fundamental points of difference among the Churches have been set in a clearer focus:

(1) There is a greater awareness of the fact that both Word and Sacrament are essential to the fullness of Christian worship. They are not antithetical, but complementary. For the Word of God, when truly preached and received, is the imparting of grace no less than the instrumentalities of the sacraments. On the other hand, the Sacraments are themselves a setting forth of the saving Word. This growing acceptance of the equal importance of both Word and Sacrament in any complete experience of the wholeness of Christian worship is probably the most significant result of the discussions stimulated by the Commission on Ways of Worship up to this time.

(2) There is also a recognition of the fact that a crucial problem remains to be resolved in the differences of the Churches' apprehension of the meaning of sacrifice as applied to acts of Christian corporate worship. Sacrifice is one of the oldest and most universal terms of religious worship. Its meaning has undergone many changes in the course of history, both in Judaism and in Christianity. It was a term of bitter controversy in the era of the Reformation, when the unity of Western Christendom was shattered. A major task still lies ahead of us in an interpretation of sacrifice when applied to the Church's worship, particularly in respect to the celebration of the Eucharist.

(3) There has slowly been emerging in ecumenical discussion the question as to what extent the Churches should be bound by traditional liturgical forms, particularly those created and developed in the early centuries of the undivided Church. In all Churches to-day there is a noticeable trend towards a more formal worship and the use of traditional materials. But there are insistent voices raised that maintain the importance of a worship free of fixed and imposed forms, under the direct guidance of the Spirit. And even among those Christians who accept and follow an historic liturgy there is the problem of change and adaptation. All liturgical Churches to-day in Western Christendom, including the Roman Catholics, are presently engaged in revisions of their liturgies. Among the Eastern Orthodox Churches there is a certain restlessness with their ancient liturgies, fixed and unchanged for centuries, especially among those Orthodox groups that have emigrated from their ancient homelands to foreign countries and cultures.

Thus, in circles immediately concerned with the ecumenical problem, there is an increasing interest in questions of worship. To date, they have been concerned for the most part with the actual differences in worship among the Churches, seeking areas of common agreement and noting areas of significant disagreement. There has, however, been

little attempt to explore the whole historical background of these differences, ultimately to their sources in variant interpretations of the Scriptures, and of the early period of the Church, when the great historic rites of East and West arose. There is a very real awareness that the subject of Christian worship is a crucial one in any hope there may be for a reunited Christendom. Among a few leaders, there is a growing conviction that the clue to reunion may very well lie in a common understanding of Christian worship, both as an expression of the wholeness of the Christian Faith and as a means of continuity in the life of the Church through the ages.

It is at this very point, namely, the historical origin and meaning of Christian worship, that the Liturgical Movement has made the greatest progress, and can give to the Ecumenical Movement much that it needs in perspective. For the Liturgical Movement has from its beginning concerned itself very much with the study of early Christian worship and the development of the historic rites of the Church. Indeed, the Liturgical Movement has often been accused of being overly historical in its approach, of being "archæological" in its interests. To appreciate this charge, one must recall something of the history of the Liturgical Movement.

The Liturgical Movement is generally considered to have started in the 1830s among the Roman Catholic Benedictines of France. Under the leadership of Dom Guéranger, these monks began a programme for the restoration of the Roman liturgy in France in all its ancient purity, both of rite and chant. A massive amount of scholarship was devoted to the study of the history of the Latin liturgy, and particularly of the oldest manuscripts of the Gregorian chant. This work was crowned with success in the early years of the twentieth century, when Pope Pius X officially adopted the results of the researches of the Benedictines in the official service books of the Roman Church. But the pontificate of Pius X also saw new directions given to the Movement in Roman Catholicism. Not only was a long-term reform of the Roman liturgy set in motion—a

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History

Pope Pius X
reform that is to-day beginning to bear fruit; but the Pope also initiated a movement to bring the laity more directly into participation in the liturgical life of the Church by his insistence upon the importance of the laity "praying the Mass" (instead of using private devotions at the liturgy) and in a more frequent reception of communion within, rather than without, the context of the Eucharistic celebration. Since the time of Pius X great advances have been made in Roman Catholicism in the education of the laity in the liturgy. Not only the Benedictines, but also the Dominicans and some Jesuits have become active in these more pastoral concerns. And there is already a strong leadership in the Roman Church looking towards the use of the liturgy in the vernacular in order to increase lay participation in liturgical worship.

Not long after the Liturgical Movement got under way in the Roman Church, there was a somewhat similar development in Anglicanism, in the so-called "Ritualistic Movement" that followed in the wake of the Oxford Movement. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw a great revival of interest in Anglicanism in the historical background of the Prayer Book. Many pre-Reformation ceremonies and usages were reintroduced in Anglican Churches, and many controversies were aroused by these innovations. Meanwhile, Anglican scholars united with Roman Catholic scholars in the serious study of liturgical origins and developments. Partly in the wake of this new development came the beginnings of Prayer Book revisions, first in Ireland and the United States then, in the twentieth century, in Scotland, Canada, South Africa, India, and now in Japan. These revisions have all had behind them the great work of historical research done in the past century. But they have also ceased to be primarily a mere revival of past forms that had been lost. More and more concern is now being given to the inner meaning of our liturgical heritage and its adaptation to the problems of contemporary life. The liturgical ferment in Anglicanism is less and less a matter of history. It is more and more concerning itself with fundamental questions of the

meaning of worship and the basic forms through which this meaning is expressed.

Similarly, in the twentieth century, other Churches have been aroused to re-examine their practices of worship and to enrich them out of the past. In the Lutheran Churches and the Reformed Churches of Europe there has been a marked development of interest in liturgical reform, based upon sound historical knowledge. And in America the Protestant Churches are beginning to show a greater degree of interest in liturgical worship, and are looking to the Anglicans and Lutherans for guidance in this new concern. Many Protestant Churches in America already have elaborate liturgical services, though often it is only the form that has been taken over, and very little of the inherent theological meaning. But the old bitterness against historic forms is very much on the wane, and this fact makes impartial discussion of the question much easier and more fruitful.

The Liturgical Movement has been greatly strengthened in the past generation by the new currents in Biblical study. There has been a marked shift in Biblical criticism in recent years from the purely critical and humanistic approach to the Bible, and a greater interest in the theology of the Bible. Along with this new theological concern with Scripture has come a greater appreciation of the early Fathers. Scholars of all Christian Churches have "re-discovered" the Fathers of the Church. All of this development has produced an extraordinary degree of unity in the interpretation of the faith and life of the early Church. And since all Christian Churches appeal to primitive Christianity as their model and standard, this new development has been a source of strength to the Ecumenical Movement, no less than to the Liturgical Movement.

It is no exaggeration to say that there exists now among scholars of all branches of Christendom a greater unity in their interpretation of early Church history than at any time since the Reformation. And this is as true of early Christian worship as it is of other aspects of the ancient Church. Much of this is due to the discovery in recent

times, in this whole, vast work of historical research, of many ancient documents concerning Christian worship that were unknown in the era of the Reformation. We can trace with a fair degree of assurance the development both of the forms and the content of Christian worship from the apostolic age through the first three centuries and beyond, to the crystallization of the great historic rites of East and West. This would not have been possible even one hundred years ago.

In the lectures that follow in this series, we shall endeavour to utilize the results and insights now available and largely accepted by liturgical students of all Churches, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant. We shall attempt to show what bearing they have upon our own Anglican tradition, as enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer. And out of this, perhaps, we may gain some insights not only in the direction of the more formal problems of Prayer Book revision, but more importantly in the spirit with which our worship is conducted and experienced in our several parishes.

THE EASTER MYSTERY

THE Resurrection of our Lord is not only the crucial fact of Christian Faith; it is the crucial centre of Christian worship. Easter Day is the focus of the whole liturgy of the Church. As St Paul reminded the Corinthian Church—"if Christ be not risen, then is your faith in vain"—so, without Easter, none of the worship of the Church would make any sense.

To understand the primacy of Easter aright, however, we must understand what it meant originally in the primitive Church. During the first three centuries of its history, Easter was not merely the celebration of the Resurrection alone, but of the whole drama of saving events whereby our Lord brought us life and salvation. It was the celebration of the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Gift of the Holy Spirit all at once. Easter was the Christian Passover, taking the place of the old Passover of the Jews. Thus we must look first at the Jewish Passover and what it meant to the people of God of the Old Covenant, and then understand how, in the light of our Lord's triumph over sin and death, it was transformed into the Passover of the people of God of the New Covenant.

The Passover was probably the oldest—it was certainly the most distinctive—of all the festivals of Judaism. Its origins are wrapped in obscurity. But throughout all the changes and developments in its history, it maintained certain important aspects of its original character. It was a domestic celebration. The Passover meal was eaten in the home by family groups or intimate circles of close friends. Its ritual was presided over by the head of the family. It was a festal banquet; and in this character it remained in some way a sacrifice of the primitive type—

*Easter as
the Passover*

The Passover

1)
2)
3)
4)

a joyous communion and fellowship. It was in no way a sacrifice for sin, a propitiation of God. In later times this joy and festivity were given a peculiar character, as a remembrance of the great act of God's deliverance of his people from the bondage of slavery and oppression in Egypt. The Passover was a commemoration of God's redemption of his people, his setting them free to become his chosen people for a special purpose in history. The Passover out of Egypt brought them through the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, where the Covenant was established, and set them on towards the goal of the promised land.

The Passover was therefore a celebration of thanksgiving and remembrance for an historic deliverance. But it was also a time when the offerings were made of the first-fruits, the promise of a good harvest, of well-being and prosperity. Fifty days after the offering of first-fruits would come the feast of Pentecost, the festival of the first ingathering of harvest. But this festival, so closely linked to Passover in the assurance of God's blessing of food, was also linked to Passover in its historical commemoration. For as Passover recalled the deliverance from Egypt, so Pentecost was a commemoration of the giving of the Law and establishment of the Covenant.

In our Lord's time, the Passover, because of its peculiar memories of past redemption, was also the time of vivid hope. About it gathered all the expectation of the Jews for the final deliverance, when God's Kingdom would come on earth and God's people should no more know want and oppression. The excitement of Passover was all the more keen because it was a promise, a hope of better things to come. It was at Passover that the coming of the Messiah was expected. It was at Passover that Messianic movements were most likely to occur. No wonder, then, that the Romans took special precautions at Passover against disturbance of the peace; no wonder that Pilate gave so hurried a trial and sentence to one who was hailed before him on the charge of being "King of the Jews".

It is against this background that we see the fateful events that brought our Lord to his death. Against this

Passover +
Pentecost

(1)
Deliverance
+
Law +
Cov +
(2)
Hope

Messiah

background also we see the assurance of the new deliverance in his resurrection—albeit in a manner far different from what his disciples expected. Only in the light of that Resurrection experience could the disciples understand the mysterious words Jesus had said at the Last Supper, words about the Kingdom and the New Covenant, established in the outpouring of his life's blood. And fifty days later, at Pentecost, the gift of the Spirit was the seal upon this new redemption—the sign that the Kingdom was come and that the new age of the Spirit had replaced the old age of the Law.

In exper
of Passover
Easter -
Pentecost

Thus from the very beginning of the Church's existence, the fifty days of Passover to Pentecost was the centre of the Church's proclamation of the good news of the Gospel, and of its liturgical life. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," said St Paul, "therefore let us keep the feast!"



(1) In the triumph of Christ, the new people of God were constituted—the new family of brethren, the household of faith, the heirs with Christ of the promises of God. The final redemption from sin and death had been accomplished.

(2) The New Covenant was established, the covenant foretold by the prophets, when the Law would be written upon men's hearts, when the Law would be fulfilled not in bondage to the letter, but in freedom of the Spirit.

(3) The Kingdom promised of old was now available to all, both Jew and Gentile. And the outpouring of the Spirit, the manifestations of the Spirit in the Church's life, was the evident sign of the presence of the Age to Come.

(4) The risen and ascended Messiah was first among many brethren. In his triumph there was manifested the assurance of the triumph of all who belonged to him. He made them to sit with himself in the heavenly places. They shared in his anointing, being made kings and priests unto God.

Out of these germinal ideas and experiences the liturgy of the Church was developed, taking the place inevitably

Liturgical transformation

In sense of Passover

Pentecost

The Temple

of the old system of sacrifices and observances of Israel. The liturgy of the Church was not so much a new creation, as a transformation and transfiguration of the old cultus. The Passover remains, not as a commemoration of the deliverance from an historical bondage but as the commemoration of a deliverance that transcends history—redemption from sin, and death the penalty of sin. The Pentecost remains, not as the memorial of the Covenant established on Mount Sinai but as the eternal Covenant of the gift of the Spirit. The Temple ceases to be the centre of the old cultus, geographically located on Mount Sion in Jerusalem. In its place is the Temple of Christ's Body, the Church, where the living Lord is present wherever his people meet. The synagogue assembly gives way to the elect congregation of the Church. Circumcision is replaced by Baptism; the sacrifice by the Eucharist.

These transformations were not immediately evident. For the first generation of its existence, when the disciples of Jesus were predominantly Jewish, the life of the Church was carried on alongside Judaism, albeit with a growing tension. In fact, the Church appeared at first as a sect or group within Judaism—those of a peculiar "Way" distinguished from their fellow Jews by their specific beliefs about Jesus of Nazareth. It was the crisis created by the admission of Gentiles, on a basis of equality with Jews in the Christian fellowship, that caused a sharper break with the old religion and forced the leaders of the Church to think through the full implications of their faith: that, in Christ, God had brought the old Covenant to fulfilment and opened a new day in the history of his people.

By the end of the first century the break with Judaism was complete. The Gentile membership of the Church now had a majority. The Temple had been destroyed by the Romans, and this was taken by Christian apologists as a proof of God's final judgement upon the disbelief of Judaism in the true Messiah. Christian believers had been expelled from all attendance at the synagogues, and prayers were introduced in the synagogue liturgy against the Christian "heretics". The Law was not considered binding upon

the Gentile convert; and those few Jewish Christians who adhered in full loyalty to the Law went into schism with the Church and ceased to have direct relations with it. By the middle of the second century, the outlines of the Church's liturgical life were clearly evident, in a pattern that has been the basis of all Christian rites, both East and West, ever since. Some elements of this pattern possibly are as old as the apostolic age itself. Others appear to have been worked out in the sub-apostolic period of transition, when the break with Judaism was finally accomplished.

The Easter celebration of the Church each year was by this time the one chief event in the Church every year. It was the celebration of the Christian mystery of redemption through all the mighty acts of God in Christ. It lasted for fifty days, in one continuous festival of joy and thanksgiving. Ritually, the period was marked by the repeated chant of the Alleluia, the acclamation of praise particularly associated with the Alleluia psalms, sung by the Jews at the great feasts. Ceremonially, the period was marked by the custom of standing at prayer. No kneeling was allowed. For the ceremony of standing in prayer symbolized the confidence which the Church had in its redemption, in being able to stand before the presence of God unashamed. These, however, are but minor indications of the uniqueness of this period of festivity.

More significantly, Easter was the one time when Baptism was administered—though for those unable to be present at the Easter initiation, a second opportunity was given at the close of the period, that is, at Pentecost. By Baptism we refer to the full celebration of the sacramental mystery of redemption—what would include Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist all in one continuous rite. It is important to remember this. For the Easter sacrament in the ancient Church is *one* rite, not a series of three rites placed consecutively one after the other. We are so accustomed to thinking of them as three distinct rites or sacraments that it is difficult for us to look at them from the viewpoint of the ancient Church. Only at Easter was the full unity of the mystery completely celebrated. It was an

A. Primacy
of Easter's
50 Days!

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②

Standing

③ Baptism
a) Easter
b) Pentecost

all-night celebration, beginning with a vigil of psalmody and lessons, followed by Baptism, then by Confirmation—and at the dawn of Easter Day, immediately after the Confirmations were ended, the Easter Eucharist. The Bishop presided over the entire service. The whole congregation was gathered together in one place (at a later time, at the cathedral, where the Bishop had his seat, and where the baptistery was located).

D/R { This Easter mystery, sacramentally celebrated, was the annual renewal of the whole Church in its participation in redemption. It was the time when new members were added to this corporate Body of Christ. Its initiation was a once-for-all saving act of God. Through it men passed from death to life, from damnation to salvation. Its uniqueness emphasized the eternal character of the gifts of grace imparted and received. It was, so to speak, the conferring of citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. So Baptism was a conferring of forgiveness of sin in this world, and the inheritance of the world to come. So Confirmation was, in conjunction with Baptism, the imparting of the gift of the Spirit, the new life of the world to come. The Eucharist was the feeding upon the heavenly food of Christ's victorious, glorified life, immediately offered in sequence to this initiation. The whole mystery was nothing less than death and resurrection—inwardly and mystically appropriated, to be sure, but none the less really accomplished.

B. Sunday { But the Easter mystery was repeated, in part, by the continual celebration of the Eucharist each week. Every Sunday, the first day of the week, was a recalling of Easter. Through the Eucharist, the initiated renewed constantly his nourishment in the heavenly gifts, and was continually fulfilled with the Holy Spirit. Sunday replaced the old Sabbath. Where the old Sabbath recalled the rest of God in finishing his creation of the world; so Sunday recalled the beginning of God's work of re-creation of the new world, begun in the Resurrection of Christ. There is no greater confirmation of the whole spirit and outlook of the Church regarding the unique character of Christ's saving

work than the substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath, no less than of Easter for the old Passover.

Another consequence of the Easter mystery was the development in the Church, by the middle of the second century, of the observance of the anniversaries of the martyrs. For the martyrs were the conspicuous, visible witnesses to a Christian's full participation with Christ in death and resurrection. Hence the Church observed the anniversaries of the deaths of the martyrs as festive days recalling Easter, and participated on these days, as on Sundays, in the Eucharistic feast. In paganism, anniversaries of birthdays had been observed—birthdays into the life of this world. In Christianity, so crucial was the Easter faith, that death was viewed as a "birthday"—the birthday into eternity, when the Christian who had died and risen in the font of Baptism was finally assured of everlasting joy and peace.

It was the preparation of candidates for the Easter mysteries of initiation that led to the season of Lent. At first it was a day or two days of fast, then it was gradually extended to a week, and finally, by the fourth century, it was increased to a forty-day period, associated with the Lord's forty-day fast in the wilderness at the time of his Baptism. During this preparatory season special instructions were given the candidates for Baptism, and the faithful already initiated joined with them in exercises of prayer, self-denial, and almsgiving, so that they too might share in some way in the renewal of life imparted in the Easter mysteries. Lent was not originally conceived as a season of penitence for the faithful—though penitence certainly was an element in the proper preparation for Easter. Its original purpose was one of discipline in preparation for the fullness of the Easter sacramental mystery. Its basic disciplines were prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. And all of the propers in the liturgy (the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels) were developed in relation to this forthcoming Easter celebration, when catechumens would be fully initiated into the new life of grace and heavenly benediction.

At a later time still, when the Daily Offices were

Death as
"birthday"
into eternity
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Balthus

Original
Lent

The Office
Reading
& Meditation
on Scripture
+
Prayer

developed, especially in monasticism, as the daily devotional framework for Christian life, the Easter mystery was primary in the formulation of its schedules. For particularly characteristic of the Daily Offices is their ordered course of reading and meditation upon the Scriptures, wherein is recorded the whole drama of redemption. Hence the reading was so arranged that Genesis was begun at Septuagesima (the old New Year's Day, about the beginning of March) and the reading was continued in such a way that the story of the Passover, recorded in Exodus, was read at Easter. Then the period of Eastertide was devoted to the reading of the stories of the "church in the wilderness", until at Pentecost they came to the entrance into the promised land, under the leadership of Joshua. This course of reading was allegorically interpreted by applying it to the Church. At Easter, the people of God passed out of bondage (that is, Egypt) and were baptized (that is, in the Red Sea). At Pentecost, they passed over Jordan, out of the wilderness into Canaan (that is, they passed through death, out of the afflictions of this world, into the Kingdom of Heaven).

Only as we understand this massive transformation of the story of redemption, whereby the historic experiences of the old people of God are translated into the experiences of the new people of God, can we appreciate the central core which gives meaning to the whole basic development of the Christian liturgy.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

THE Christian Year, centred in Easter, is the framework of the liturgy. It is far more than a useful device for marking the passage of time, or even for instructional purposes in the principal events of the life of our Lord and of his saints. It is a means whereby the Church so lives in time, that it takes hold of the eternal life that is given it in Christ. The Christian Year is far more than a calendar. It is a means of grace, whereby we can "redeem the time", to use St Paul's phrase. It involves us in the mystery of redemption. It is an instrument for living the fullness of the faith.

We have noted in the previous lecture that the Christian Year is pivoted on the fifty days from Easter to Pentecost, and that all Sundays are directly related to Easter, as a weekly renewal of the Paschal experience. Originally, as we have seen, these fifty days were a celebration of the whole drama of redemption gathered into one: the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Gift of the Holy Spirit. Only in the fourth century did this wholeness come to be broken down into a series of more particular observances: the observances of Holy Week, culminating in the memorial of the Passion on Friday; the commemoration of the Resurrection on Easter Day and the week following; the recalling of the Ascension forty days later; and finally the Gift of the Spirit on Pentecost itself.

The propers of the Eucharist none the less bind together these mighty acts in an interrelated sequence. We cannot trace the fixation of these propers earlier than the fifth and sixth centuries, but they rest upon older principles and experiments. Let us outline them briefly, beginning with the fifty-day Easter season:

(1) The Epistle for Easter Day (Colossians 3. 1 ff.) summarizes the mystery: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above", etc. Here is brought together Resurrection and Ascension, and final glory, as experienced in the Church by its mystical union with Christ.

(2) During Easter Week all the New Testament accounts of the Resurrection were read, ending with the appearance to Thomas on the Octave of Easter. At the Reformation the Prayer Book shortened this sequence (unfortunately), leaving only propers for Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and the Octave. The Epistle on the Octave reviews the mysteries received by the candidates initiated on Easter Even: water, blood, Spirit. And the theme of the Second Sunday—the Good Shepherd—is also related to the Easter initiation—since the figure of the Good Shepherd played a prominent part in the ancient Church as a figure of the relation of Christ to his flock. It was a favourite decoration of early Christian baptisteries.

(3) Through the rest of Eastertide, and on into Whitsuntide, the Epistles are taken from the Catholic Epistles, and treat of the inner life of the Christian fellowship, in its share in Christ's sufferings, in its opposition from the world, such as Christ endured. They state the victory of the Christian, as of Christ, over the afflictions of the world.

(4) The Gospels are drawn from our Lord's discourse to his disciples about the Spirit. The possession of the Spirit is the unique characteristic of the Church. The Spirit is the bond of union between the risen, ascended Lord and his Church. He is the guide and teacher of the Church. He is the advocate of the Church as it faces the hostility of the world. He is the grace of sacrament and prayer.

Thus the Eastertide propers gather together the full meaning of Christian life both as it is set in a hostile world, and also as it transcends the world in the victorious life fulfilled with the Holy Spirit. The Eastertide propers remind the Church, and particularly its newly initiated members, of all that is involved in the new life in Christ, both in this

world and in the world to come. It is a life "hid with Christ in God" so that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory".

The Lenten propers are a preparation for Easter, particularly for the initiation of Easter Eve. They begin with the First Sunday of Lent, the ancient beginning of the Lenten fast, for Ash Wednesday is a later addition to the scheme, when the old discipline of preparing catechumens for baptism at Easter was falling out of use.

(1) The Gospel for the First Sunday in Lent, in all the Western liturgies, is the story of our Lord's temptation during his forty-day retreat in the wilderness after his Baptism. It recounts his renunciation of the flesh, the world, and the devil, the three renunciations of the ancient baptismal liturgy. Undoubtedly, this Gospel, at the beginning of Lent, reminds the catechumens of the preparations they must make during the forty-day period for similar renunciations before their initiation into the Christ-life.

(2) The Epistles during Lent all deal with salient contrasts between life outside and life inside the fellowship of Christ. They are calls to renounce the affections of the world, both of body and of spirit. Not only uncleanness of body, but demoniac darkness of soul, are contrasted with the holiness, light, and freedom of Christian living.

(3) The Gospels present our Lord in varying roles of Saviour and Deliverer. They show him as the hope of men—the outcast Gentile, the demoniacally depressed, the hungry, and dissatisfied.

(4) These lessons reach their climax in the Holy Week propers, when the great prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Suffering Servant are combined with the gospel accounts of the Passion, read in their canonical order, from Matthew through John. The climax of these passion gospels comes with the recognition of the heathen centurion: "Surely this man was the Son of God". It is to this same recognition and profession of faith that the catechumens are to be drawn, a profession they must make before their initiation on Easter Even. At the end of the Johannine passion gospel, read on Good Friday, occurs the

mystic reference to the water and blood that flowed from the Lord's pierced side. These are the sacraments of life that flow from his victory on the Cross. Their meaning will become clear in the mysteries of Easter Week.

Our Prayer Book schedule for Lent is, of course, only a reduction to Sundays of what was originally a fuller scheme that included the weekdays of Lent. On these weekdays the great passages of the Old Testament were read for the Epistles, and almost the entire Gospel of John, and much of Matthew were read for the Gospels. It was a summary training in the whole Scriptural record of God's saving acts. These were again summarized in the vigil that began the Easter sacrament, and led into the renunciations and professions of Baptism.

Lent and Easter are thus the core of the Christian Year. In the earliest period of the Church they were only supplemented by the holy days of anniversaries of the martyrs and Sundays, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, were continuations of Easter. Their eves or vigils, like a reduced Lent, were a solemn preparation for the feast-day of Easter character. After the peace of the Church in the fourth century, these holy days were expanded to include much more than the anniversaries of martyrs, though the martyr-cult helped to stimulate this development. There were:

- (a) The translations of the relics of the martyrs.
- (b) The anniversaries of dedications of churches to the martyrs.
- (c) The "discovery" of other martyrs' relics, such as those of the apostles.
- (d) The anniversaries of holy men and saintly leaders, who were assumed to have been martyrs in spirit, if not in fact.

All these days greatly enriched the sense of "communion of saints" in the Church's worship. And they were significant stages marking the growth and history of the local Churches. Each Church had its own peculiar calendar. It was the accident, of the ninth century, whereby the Roman

calendar, with the Roman liturgy, became dominant in the Western Church that brought a general uniformity in the calendar of the Western Church.

At the Reformation, this large calendar of holy days had grown out of bounds and there was severe pruning. The Reformers left only the saints who had a basis in the New Testament—apostles, evangelists, angels—with a general commemoration of all the others in “All Saints”. This was a great impoverishment, and recent revisions have sought to rectify this by attempts at enlarging the calendar. But there are problems connected with this:

- (a) The question of authority: There being no central authority in our communion, as in the Roman Church, the calendar can only revert to the more primitive authority of local Churches or provinces.
- (b) The criteria by which selections are made: These cannot necessarily be left to popular initiative. Nor can we allow legendary factors to control our choices. There is even a problem of deciding between distinguished service and holiness of life. Should the calendar be representative of Church History, or should it be one based solely upon religious and moral values? This question arises because of the modern tendency to apply standards of historical research to all theological and liturgical questions.

The problem of an adequate calendar of holy days, always linked in mind with Easter, raises fundamental issues: such as, the Church’s remembrance of departed members, the Church’s conception of heaven, last judgement, etc. The issue is already at hand among us in the tendency in some places to restore All Souls’ Day, with its Requiem celebrations of the Eucharist, immediately after All Saints’ Day. But in the Prayer Book tradition, All Saints’ is the same as All Souls’.

The Incarnation Festival—A Second Focus

There arose in the fourth century a second focus of the Christian Year—the Incarnation festival. Its origins are

diverse, and there is some disagreement among scholars as to the exact sources. In any case, these seem to be the main lines of development:

(1) The Eastern Churches began with an Epiphany festival on January 6th, to offset a popular pagan feast of the birthday or manifestation of a pagan saviour-god. This festival was not so much a "birthday" feast, commemorating the birth of our Lord, as a theological feast of his manifestation openly as the Redeemer of the world, whether in his Birth, Baptism, or first miracle. The date, January 6th, represents an older winter solstice, observed in the Eastern Mediterranean in the first centuries A.D.

(2) The Church in Rome in the early fourth century instituted the feast of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas Day) on December 25th, to offset the pagan festival of the Sun-god at the winter solstice, reckoned at that time as occurring on December 25th. It is thought that Constantine had a hand in this new feast, since he had been a Sun-worshipper before his conversion to Christianity. In any case, the pagan Sun-worship was the last and most vigorous rival to Christianity in the ancient world. It was a kind of monotheism, which gathered into itself the last great pagan religious philosophy, Neo-Platonism. The Christian feast was not so much a memorial of the actual historical birth of our Lord—since the day was unknown—as it was a theological emphasis upon the Incarnation. Its ancient Gospel is the prologue of the Gospel of St John—only later did it include the nativity narrative of St Luke.

(3) During the fourth century East and West adopted one another's feasts, giving us the twelve-day Christmas-Epiphany feast. The next stage was the development of a preparatory season, analogous to Lent, for the initiation of Baptism, at Epiphany. This was originally a forty-day period, and was called Advent, a word meaning "Coming". Later the Western Church reduced this preparation season to four weeks before Christmas, but added a post-Epiphany season, which lasted until the beginning of Lent.

Several observations should be made with respect to this new centre of the Christian year:

- (a) Easter-Pentecost is based upon the lunar calendar of the Jews, and grew out of Jewish festivals. It is an organic development of the Church out of its Jewish roots. It is centred upon the victory of God in Christ, in his Death and Resurrection. The Christmas-Epiphany feast is based upon the solar calendar of the Gentile world, and is the Christian taking over of the type of religious festival common among the Gentiles. It is centred upon the Incarnation, and stands over against all the pagan gods who manifested themselves, according to pagan myth and legend, as saviours of men. Thus in its liturgy the Christian religion exhibits its claim to be the fulfilment of both the Jewish and the Gentile "preparation of the Gospel". As historically the Church passed from Judaism to a Gentile world, so liturgically it has taken up the Jewish feast of greatest significance, and added to it the Gentile feast of greatest significance.
- (b) The Birthday of Christ is the only birthday into time that the Church has recognized. It is true that, at a later time, the calendar added the birthdays of St Mary and St John the Baptist—but these, only because they were of significance in relation to the birthday of our Lord. Both St Mary and St John the Baptist have their "death" days as well as other saints. In this concentration upon death as the real birthday of Christians, the Church's liturgy is unique, and shows the predominant influence of Easter in all its mysteries. Only the birthday of him who is the divine Son of God, the unique Incarnation, is admitted by the Church. For his life in time was momentous. The lives of all other Christians in time are significant only in the way they are fulfilled in death and resurrection.
- (c) The Christmas-Epiphany festival is theological,

rather than historical. It is merely another way of viewing the mystery of the God-Man. The setting of the Christmas-Epiphany festival in the larger framework of Advent makes this clear. For the final Advent of Christ, as Judge of quick and dead, joins with the Risen and Ascended Lord in portraying one and the same Lord. The end of the Epiphany season brings us to the final Advent (just as the beginning of the Advent season)—and this is the vision of the Ascension. “This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.”

- (d) Moreover, Christmas-Epiphany is meaningless without Easter. God came into the world in order that he might return victorious over sin and death. The babe lying in the manger at Bethlehem is destined to the Cross of Calvary and the Empty Tomb. It is inconceivable that the Church should ever dissociate the Birth of our Lord from what that Birth looked towards, in Cross and Resurrection.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION

IN the last decade, no subject of Christian theology and liturgy has been more discussed than the origins and meaning of Christian Initiation: Baptism and Confirmation. In Anglicanism particularly, this discussion has gone on vigorously since the publication in 1944 of a report of a commission appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, entitled *Confirmation To-day*. The debates provoked by this document have led to further commission reports, such as *Baptism To-day* and *The Theology of Christian Initiation*. The subject was also taken up by the Lambeth Conference in 1948, and forms a notable part of the Conference's official Report. Of the many important articles and books that have appeared in the course of this discussion, two should be mentioned: a lecture of the late Dom Gregory Dix, delivered at Oxford, entitled *The Theology of Confirmation in Relation to Baptism*; and the impressive book of Professor G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit*. One should also note the first of the Prayer Book Studies of the American Church's Liturgical Commission on *Baptism and Confirmation*, for this has been the occasion of much discussion in the Church in the United States.

Meanwhile, and quite independently of the Anglican publications, the question has been given an ecumenical dimension by the small book of so eminent a theologian as Karl Barth, on *The Teaching of Holy Baptism*, in which the great Swiss theologian made a strong and positive attack upon the practice of infant Baptism. His work has been answered by Dr Oscar Cullmann, the noted New Testament and Patristics scholar of Zürich, not to speak of many other works by continental European theologians.

Most of these works deal with the theology of Christian initiation and the New Testament and Patristic evidence for the meaning of Baptism. Little attention has so far been given to problems of the form of Christian initiatory rites. Indeed, there still remains to be written a comprehensive history of the rites of Christian initiation, comparable to the many fine works on the history of the Eucharist.

It is curious, when we stop to think of it, how varied are the practices of initiation in the several Churches of Christendom, since all Churches maintain, at least, that Baptism in water and the Name of the Trinity is a sacrament generally necessary to salvation. The Eastern Orthodox Churches administer the full initiatory rite, both Baptism and Confirmation, at one and the same time, to infants; and the rite is performed by the priest, although in Confirmation the priest must use an anointing with chrism (or consecrated oil) that has been blessed by the Bishop. The infant so initiated is admitted at once to communion at the Holy Eucharist. In the Western Church, as we shall see, Baptism has come to be separated from Confirmation, and even made into two distinct sacraments. In the Roman Catholic Church, Confirmation is usually administered to baptized children at a relatively early age, but it is not made a condition of admission to Holy Communion. The Anglicans and Lutherans defer Confirmation until the baptized child has reached the age of discretion, and make it, in normal cases, a prerequisite for communicant status. But Anglicans, unlike Lutherans, reserve the rite of Confirmation to the Bishop. Most Protestant bodies, except the Lutherans, have abandoned Confirmation altogether, though they usually have some form of service admitting baptized members to communicant status. But certain large Protestant bodies, such as the Baptists, do not allow the Baptism of infants, but insist upon conferring Christian initiation only to those who have reached sufficient maturity so that they can make their profession of Christian faith for themselves, and not through the agency of sponsors.

Certainly, in the face of this remarkable variety of practice, there is a real problem for ecumenical theology. A thorough re-examination of the whole history of Christian initiation is necessary. Nor should we necessarily assume that our Anglican tradition is any nearer to the "mind of the New Testament and early Fathers" than that of other Christian communions. Indeed, there are certain obscurities, not to say disagreements, within Anglicanism itself on these matters that call for serious and careful re-thinking.

All Christian Churches have accepted Baptism as a sacrament instituted by our Lord. And the traditional support for this institution has been the command of Jesus to his disciples, after his Resurrection, as recorded at the end of St Matthew's Gospel, to go into all the world preaching and teaching, and baptizing their converts in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Modern criticism has contested the full authenticity of this command, for both textual and theological reasons. Be that as it may, it is true to say that most Biblical and liturgical scholars today consider that the evidence for any specific institution by our Lord of Baptism is difficult to determine. The principal basis for the Church's practice is, in any case, the example of our Lord himself, in his Baptism at the hands of John the Baptist.

There can be little doubt that the Gospel accounts of our Lord's Baptism serve, among other purposes, as a model of the Church's initiation. There is the rite of water Baptism for the remission of sins, the outpouring of the Spirit and, in close association with this event, the account of the Lord's renunciation of the flesh, the world, and the devil. All three elements were part of the Church's initiation from the beginning. And St Matthew makes this all the more clear in the remark he attributes to our Lord, in answer to John the Baptist, that thus (that is, in his being baptized) it was needful to fulfil all righteousness.

Certainly the baptism practised by John the Baptist lies immediately behind the Christian sacrament. It is John's preaching and baptism that forms the beginning of the

Gospel message in its earliest form. A few remarks about John's baptism are therefore in order:

(a) We do not know where John took the idea of baptism. It may have been from the practice of proselyte baptism (of which we shall say more), or it may have been suggested by the Levitical rites of purification, or it may have been the invention of John himself after the manner of prophetic inspiration.

(b) John's baptism was one of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. It demanded a moral conversion as the sole condition of the grace of forgiveness. It was thus applied to all persons equally, whether Jew or Gentile. It was a preparation for admission into God's coming Kingdom, and looked forward to that final baptism of the Kingdom, to be administered by the Messiah, a baptism of fire and the Spirit.

(c) Not only Jesus, but many of his disciples, and also many of the earliest converts to Christianity had received John's baptism. Even during his earthly ministry, Jesus' disciples had baptized others, with our Lord's approval. It is only natural, therefore, that the practice of baptism should have been continued, or rather taken over by the Church.

(d) But in the practice of the Church, the baptism in water for the forgiveness of sins was viewed as the final baptism that John had foretold. It was also a baptism with the Holy Spirit, and was in a real sense an admission into the life of the Kingdom of God, established in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The distinctive element of Christian initiation was always the gift of the Spirit. And St Paul only deepened this conception by his linking of Christian baptism with the experience of death and resurrection with Christ. For through his Death and Resurrection only do we come into the life of the age to come, the age of the Spirit.

Indeed, our Lord himself spoke of his Death as a baptism. And it is interesting to note that in St Matthew's Gospel, our Lord's one use of the word "regeneration" is a reference to the Age to Come. Christian Baptism, like John's, is profoundly eschatological in character. But

where John's Baptism was only promise, Christian Baptism is both promise and fulfilment.

Though it is never referred to in the New Testament, many scholars believe that when the Gospel spread to the Graeco-Roman world, the Christian rite of initiation was influenced by the Jewish custom of proselyte baptism of Gentiles. We know of this rite from the writings of the Jewish rabbis. It was very common in the first century A.D., when Jews were very active in missionary work among Gentiles. Any Gentile who wished to become a full Jew, by taking on all the obligations of the Jewish Law, was circumcised, if he was a male, but also baptized. And baptism could be administered to men and women alike. After a period of instruction, the Gentile was baptized in the presence of witnesses, with a brief interrogation as to his willingness to assume the obligations of the Law. The rabbis spoke of this baptism as a "rebirth". It was certainly considered to be both a change of status and a change of life. And all children born to the proselyte after his baptism were considered clean according to the Jewish law, but not his children born before his baptism. The initiation was ordinarily completed by a journey to Jerusalem, where the Gentile proselyte offered sacrifice in the Temple. We thus have a pattern of:

*Pattern
of
Jewish
Proselyte
Baptism*

Instruction
Circumcision
(if a male)
Baptism
Sacrifice

} These acts sealed a convert into the covenant of Israel, and made him one of the people of God, with all the privileges that pertained thereto.

It has been suggested that the developed pattern of Christian initiation followed the pattern of Jewish proselyte initiation, except that in most Churches (other than the Syrian Church) the order was slightly changed, thus:

Instruction
Baptism
Confirmation
Eucharist

} By this theory, Confirmation would be the Christian equivalent of circumcision, rather than Baptism. But this point is disputable.

Easter
Even
Rite

What we do know is that, by the middle of the second century, the Christian initiatory rite, which was administered on Easter Even, was the one continuous rite of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. This rite conferred, as a whole, the fullness of the Christian mystery: the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, the gift of the Spirit, and participation in the mystical food of Christ's Body and Blood.

It is not possible, as some scholars have attempted (notably Dom Gregory Dix), to separate the various gifts of grace in this initiation, and assign them to the several parts of the liturgy. The Fathers speak very loosely, sometimes referring to Baptism, sometimes to Confirmation. They did not think of this liturgy as anything other than one rite. Reference to one part of it would serve as a reference to the whole. They did not carefully distinguish the gifts imparted in Baptism from those imparted in Confirmation. And the Eucharist also was considered as conferring forgiveness, new life, and the Spirit.

It is only with the fourth century that the unity of the initiatory liturgy was broken. This was due to the great growth of Christianity, so that a bishop was no longer able to serve directly as the pastor of his whole flock. Particularly was this true in the rural areas, away from the cities where the bishop had his cathedral and baptistery. Thus it became common in the fourth century for the bishops to delegate to parish priests the right to confer initiation—at any time—provided that they use a chrism blessed by the bishop in the laying on of hands after Baptism.

In Italy the bishops refused to allow parish priests to administer the whole right of initiation, but reserved to themselves the right to complete the initiation by the laying on of hands. Thus the initiation rite was separated into two parts: Baptism and Confirmation—and these were to become in the Western Church distinct rites, and finally, in the scholastic theology, two distinct sacraments. The practice of conferring Baptism upon infants, and deferring Confirmation until a later time, when the bishop could act, only tended to accentuate the difference between the two rites.

The medieval church lost its sure knowledge of the early history of the Church and its liturgy. Hence the scholastic theologians were able to distinguish Baptism and Confirmation, and to miss the intimate association which they had once had. In general, the medieval theologians insisted that Baptism was complete initiation, being all that was needed to make a man a Christian. They admitted the baptized to communion without Confirmation—and this practice still obtains in the Roman Catholic Church. Since medieval bishops did not visit their dioceses regularly, Confirmation became in the medieval church an extra sacrament, which it was desirable, but not necessary to have. It was viewed as an added gift of the Spirit for strength—not the gift of the Spirit, but an additional gift. This was the position inherited by the Reformers.

Both the Lutherans and Anglicans continued the separation of Baptism and Confirmation, and the Anglicans continued the reserve of Confirmation to the bishops. Both Lutherans and Anglicans restored the old instruction, but placed it between Baptism and Confirmation. They therefore made this instruction a necessary requirement for Confirmation, and thus made Confirmation a requirement for admission to communion. But the Prayer Book continued the medieval theory that Baptism was full initiation, and Confirmation was an added gift of the Spirit for strength. It was a matter of discipline that demanded the withholding of communion from the baptized who were not sufficiently instructed and therefore not yet confirmed.

Anglican theology has always been influenced by the Fathers, no less than by the New Testament. And it soon became apparent to many Anglicans that, in the primitive Church of the early centuries, both Baptism and Confirmation were necessary elements in Christian initiation. The result of this has been a confusion in Anglican theology that has increased with the years, and a sharp division among Anglican theologians with respect to the relation of Baptism and Confirmation.

(a) Some Anglicans take the position that Baptism is full

Anglican
position
unclear

- initiation. Confirmation is an added gift of the Spirit, an excellent discipline, and one that should be continued for practical reasons.
- (b) Other Anglicans see Baptism as a partial initiation, which is only completed by Confirmation. According to this view, Confirmation is not an added gift of the Spirit, but *the* gift of the Spirit.

Both positions have their difficulties. The former one depreciates the importance of Confirmation, and in particular the necessity of its episcopal character. The latter position provides a real difficulty in its suggestion that the baptized person does not have a personal relation to the Holy Spirit until Confirmation. It exalts the episcopal character of Confirmation, and denies to those baptized but unconfirmed by a bishop any real part in the life of the Church Catholic.

It will be necessary for Anglicanism to resolve these tensions and disagreements and find some solution that is both in accord with the Scriptures and the historic experience of the Church. Some of the subsidiary problems raised will be:

- (a) The significance and place of infant baptism.
(b) The reservation of Confirmation to the Bishop.
(c) The requirements needed for admission to the Eucharist.

No revision of our initiatory rites in the Prayer Book should be made until we have thought through the problem, and decided what relation we are to give between Baptism and Confirmation. Here the practice and insights of other branches of the Church should be weighed and evaluated.

THE EUCHARIST

BEFORE we consider the form of the Eucharist, and its place in the common life of the Church, we must seek to discover its place in the mind and intention of our Lord. The institution of the Eucharist was the climax of our Lord's earthly ministry with his disciples; and on the night in which he was betrayed he gave it to them as the continual memorial of himself, and the means of his continual, living presence among them.

Our Lord came into the world to bring the Kingdom of God to men. The Kingdom was the substance of his preaching—the good news that it was now possible for men to enter it, by surrender to God's will and by faith in Jesus, who now made it available to them. Most of his teachings concern the Kingdom—its nature and character, and how men live in relationship one to another within it. Much of this teaching is centred in the picture of a common meal, a banquet—for this was a common figure in use among the Jews of his time to portray what the Kingdom would be like. Men would sit down to table with the Messiah, and feast with him in plenty and in security. It was the peculiar character of Jesus' use of this figure, however, to stress the presence at this feast of the lowly and the outcast, the unprivileged and the unwanted.

Many of the deeds of his ministry also centred about eating and drinking, and in particular his participation in this act with sinners. He created a scandal among upright Jews because of his habit of associating thus with the outcast and the lost. But Jesus claimed to come to minister, and not to be ministered unto. And at the Last Supper itself, he reminded his disciples, both by word and by example, that those who would be chief about the table of

the Messiah in his Kingdom must be those who serve. He insisted that the banquet of the Messiah in his Kingdom was not an occasion of privilege, or of mere enjoyment of bounteous nourishment, but a place where everyone must serve the needs of the others. His Kingdom was not based upon a hierarchy of rank, authority, and privilege, but upon a relationship of humble service.

Having given this teaching both in word and in example, our Lord at the Last Supper said in effect: This action I am giving to you as the pattern of the life of the Kingdom. Whenever you do this, as I have done it with you, you must do it in remembrance of me. But, when you do it next time with me, it will truly be done in the Kingdom. For my death will establish the New Covenant, by which the Kingdom will be inaugurated, and after that we shall eat and drink together in the Kingdom of God.

The disciples could hardly have understood all that was in the mind of our Lord at the Last Supper. They were still thinking in terms of a temporal Kingdom, such as those of this world. Hence the dispute that arose among them about which one would be the greatest in this Kingdom. But after Jesus' death, and the shattering of all hopes that he would establish such a worldly Kingdom, the Lord was made known to them alive in the breaking of bread. Only in the light of this Resurrection experience—an experience which happened in the context of the common meal, the breaking of bread—did they truly understand the meaning of his Kingdom, and the way in which the Lord would be present with them in this act.

Thus from the beginning, the Eucharist was the unique and distinctive mark of the common life of those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and true Son of God. The Eucharist was the pledge to them of the living presence of the victorious Lord in their midst. It was a true foretaste of the heavenly banquet of the Messiah. And it was a recalling of all that the Lord had done for them in his Cross and Passion. The Eucharist thus brought together: the past remembrance of their redemption, the present assurance of the Lord indwelling in their midst, and the future

hope of glory in the Kingdom when it should be established in all its fullness in the second coming of the Lord. The whole experience of the Gospel, of salvation, was centred in this act of sharing together in the Supper of the Lord. And from the beginning, only those who had been initiated fully into the fellowship of the Lord's Body, the Church, were permitted to have a part in this banquet, this feast of feasts.

In the earliest days of the Church, the Eucharist was celebrated, as was the Last Supper, within the context of a meal. Whether the Last Supper itself was the Passover meal or not is debated. Some scholars, such as Dom Gregory Dix, have maintained that it was not, but rather the fellowship meal of a Jewish religious society known as the *Haburah*. In any case, the Jewish meal, whether Passover or some other kind, has a fixed pattern. There were preliminary courses, sometimes including cups of wine. But the meal proper started with the head of the company taking bread and giving thanks to God for it, and then breaking the bread and distributing it to the whole company. During the meal that followed, conversation was devoted to religious subjects. At the conclusion of the meal the head of the company took a cup of wine—known as the Cup of Blessing—and offered a special prayer of thanksgiving over the cup, before passing it about the table for all to drink of it. This thanksgiving followed a traditional outline of contents, and began with a formal bidding: "Let us give thanks unto the Lord". It then offered praise to God for his nourishment of men with food and drink, passing to a thanksgiving for God's historic redemption of his people, and his giving them the covenant and the promised land, and finally concluded with a prayer for the speedy coming of his Kingdom.

The Christian Eucharist was a translation of this act in terms of the Christian experience of the new covenant and the redemption wrought by Christ. In place of the petition for the coming of the Kingdom, or in addition to it, was the prayer for the filling of the Church with the Holy Spirit, whose presence was the evident sign of the Kingdom.

What may have preceded this meal in the early Christian house Churches was probably common devotions, whether of a formal or an informal character. We know something of these devotions from the mission Churches founded by St Paul, and in particular those of the Church in Corinth. This may not have been typical of all apostolic Churches. It included psalms and hymns, readings and teachings from the Scriptures, preaching and prophesying and, in certain cases, speaking in tongues. But the Corinthian Church, made up as it was of the lower classes and those chiefly Gentiles, with a background of paganism, soon developed excesses in their worship, with which St Paul had to deal. Not only were their preliminary devotions disorderly, but the Eucharistic meal itself was the subject of grave abuses. The members did not eat together. The richer members separated from the poorer ones; some ate and drank to excess. And doubtless the party strife of the Corinthian Church entered into the problem.

Possibly as a result of the excesses of Gentile Christians, unfamiliar with the solemn character of Jewish sacred meals, and possibly due also to the increase of the Church in numbers, so that it was difficult to accommodate so many at a regular meal, the Eucharist was reduced (some-time in the period A.D. 50-150) to a purely ceremonial meal, consisting only of the bread and wine. It was preceded by a more formal type of corporate devotion, similar in character to the service of the Jewish synagogue. We have our first complete outline of it in the *Apology for Christianity* written at Rome about the year 150 by St Justin Martyr. As Justin was familiar with Church customs in both the East and the West, his account probably represents the way in which the Eucharist was universally celebrated about a century after the death of the apostles.

Justin tells us that on ordinary Sundays (that is, other than Easter) the congregation gathered in one place, and the service proceeded as follows:

Lessons from the Scriptures (these may have included some psalmody)

Sermon by the celebrant (usually the bishop, though in the bishop's absence a presbyter might take his place)

Intercessory prayers

Kiss of Peace

Offertory

Consecration prayer (said by the celebrant, according to his ability)

Communion

Distribution of communion from reserved sacrament to those who were absent by the deacons.

It is especially to be noted that by Justin's time, when the meal had dropped out between the blessing of the bread and of the wine, the order of the Eucharist was reduced from what Dom Gregory Dix has called the seven-action shape to the four-action shape. After the preliminary service of the Word, the Eucharist proper followed with: (1) Offertory (the taking of bread and wine together); (2) the Consecration (the blessing of bread and wine together); (3) the Breaking of the Bread (called the Fraction); and (4) the Communion (the giving of the bread and wine together).

This pattern underlies all the later liturgies of the Church, both in the East and the West, and may be called the basic structure or "shape" of the liturgy. It was extremely simple, and might be celebrated within the space of fifteen minutes. Or, if there was time, and the congregation was in no danger, it might take as much as an hour, depending upon the length of the sermon and the celebrant's inspiration in prayer. But however the celebrant may have framed the words of his prayer, it followed a traditional outline of contents. An early example of it is given in St Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition (about A.D. 200).

Sursum corda, leading into a preface of praise and thanksgiving, with a special recalling of the redemptive work of Christ. (At an early time, the Sanctus was included in this preface.)

The Words of Institution

The Memorial and Oblation

The Invocation, and prayer for the benefits of communion

Final Doxology. (How early the Lord's Prayer was attached to this cannot be said with certainty.)

It was only after the peace of the Church under Constantine that this primitive shape of the liturgy began to take on embellishments and elaborations both of rite and ceremony. These were principally as follows:

(1) The opening of the Eucharist was devoted to acts of praise (psalms or hymns or both) and a prayer before the lessons.

(2) Originally there were three lessons at least: Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel; but in most liturgies these were reduced to two: usually the Old Testament lesson was dropped, but sometimes it remained while the Epistle was dropped.

(3) The ceremonies of the Offertory were elaborated, especially in the East. The people made their offerings outside the context of the liturgy, and in place of their offering within the liturgy there developed the ceremonial procession known as the Great Entrance.

(4) The intercessions tended to be removed to a place within the Consecration.

(5) Devotions were added in connection with the Communion.

(6) Devotions after the communion were added, chiefly prayers of thanksgiving and a blessing.

At a much later time the Creed was inserted in the Eucharist—first in the East, where it was placed immediately before the Consecration; in the West during the tenth century, in a place after the Gospel. The old separation of the liturgy into the two parts, "the liturgy of the catechumens" and the "liturgy of the faithful", was obscured, with the decline of the catechumenate, due to the growth of infant baptism. The old dismissals of

catechumens after the sermon disappeared in the Western rites, and in the Eastern rites they remained only as a meaningless relic.

The fundamental change that came over the Eucharist was the decline of the people's receiving of communion regularly. And with the decline of communion, came the decline in the custom of the people making their offering. By the medieval period, in the West, the people had ceased to communicate more than once a year, at Easter. This threw the full weight of interest upon the Consecration, and the end result of this was the ceremony of adoration of the Presence in the midst of the Consecration itself. The elevation of the consecrated Bread and Wine became the climax, rather than the Communion.

Medieval

Other developments of the medieval period were: the multiplication of celebrations, specially for the departed; the loss of corporate participation in the ancient sense; and the distortion of the doctrine of sacrifice.

The Reformers of the sixteenth century, in reaction to the distortions both of doctrine and practice in the medieval period, sought above everything else to return to the standards of the New Testament Church. Their aim was to restore to the laity both an understanding of, and a more active participation in, the common worship of the Church. Because of the bitterness of the controversies of the period, and their faulty knowledge of ancient liturgies, they sometimes made their own distortions of the liturgy. (For example, Luther eliminated entirely the Offertory from the Eucharist, and Cranmer came very close to doing the same in the Second Prayer Book.)

Reformation

The liturgy of the First Prayer Book followed rather closely the old order of the rite, but purged it of all medieval distortions of Scriptural doctrine. Two things, however, were especially notable about this rite:

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- (a) There was to be no celebration without communions by at least some of the people. Communion, not Consecration, was to be the climax of the rite. This was certainly a return to primitive standards.

(b) To be certain that the people were properly prepared for the receiving of the sacrament, a penitential devotion was provided in the liturgy. In the First Prayer Book, this penitential preparation was placed between the Consecration and the Communion.

2nd BCP
1552

In the Second Prayer Book, however, not only were new additions made to the service (such as the introduction of the Commandments), but the service was rearranged in its several parts in order to make it less similar to the old rite of the medieval Church. A comparison will show what was done:

FIRST PRAYER BOOK

Collect for Purity
Kyrie

Gloria in Excelsis
Collect for the Day
Epistle
Gospel
Creed
Sermon
Offertory

Consecration (with Prayer
for Church) including
Oblation and Invocation
Lord's Prayer and Fraction
Communion

Post-Communion Thanks-
giving

Blessing

SECOND PRAYER BOOK

Collect for Purity
Commandments and Kyrie

Collect for the Day

Epistle

Gospel

Creed

Sermon

(Offertory)

Prayer for Church

Penitential Devotions]

Consecration

Communion

Lord's Prayer

Oblation Prayer, or Post-
Communion Thanksgiv-
ing

Gloria in Excelsis

Blessing

Later Anglican revisions have all returned in one way or another to certain aspects of the First Prayer Book. A few notable differences may be made:

- (a) The Scottish rite: The intercession is in the Consecration Prayer, and the penitential devotions are immediately before Communion.
- (b) The American rite: The Intercessions and penitential devotions are in the same place as in the Second Prayer Book, but the Consecration Prayer is of the type of the Scottish and First Prayer Book.

THE DAILY OFFICES

THE Daily Offices have their origin in the customs of private devotion which the early Christians inherited from Judaism. Among the Jews it was customary for devout individuals to have three periods of private devotion each day: morning, noon, and evening, consisting of the recital of the *Shema* ("Hear, O Israel") and the Prayers known as the Eighteen Benedictions (acts of praise and intercession).

The early Christians adopted these three periods, but within a century had expanded them to six: early morning, 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., sunset and midnight. Their devotions consisted of psalms, Scripture reading, and prayers, including the Lord's Prayer. These devotions were associated with events in the Passion of our Lord, or in the early history of the Church in the apostolic age.

It was the monks, in the fourth century, who especially developed these offices, systematized them, and gave them an ordered structure of psalmody and the reading of Scripture. They added two more offices, making a total of eight. From the monks, the Offices were adopted by the clergy, and frequently celebrated publicly in the Church. Lay people were not required to attend them, but often participated at least in the morning and evening offices. Of course, during the medieval period, the offices were in Latin, and the lay people did not understand them. The full scheme of eight offices were as follows:

8
Canonical
Hours

Nocturns, or Matins (beginning after midnight; the longest of the offices)

Lauds (at daybreak)

Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones (at 6, 9, 12 and 3)

Vespers (at sundown)

Compline (at bedtime)

All these offices were composed of psalms, lessons, canticles, and prayers. They were enriched by constant relating of these proper to the seasons of the Church Year, and in the medieval period they became very complicated. The Psalter was read through in its entirety once a week, and the Bible was read through once a year. But in later ages, the Bible lessons were very much reduced in length, and on many holy days they were replaced by lessons taken from the lives of the saints or the writings of the Fathers.

At the Reformation, it was the aim of Archbishop Cranmer to interest the lay people in the offices, since he saw them as an excellent means of acquainting the people with the contents of Scripture. But if the offices were to be available to the laity, they had to be put in the vernacular language, reduced in length, and made sufficiently simple, so that uninstructed lay people could follow them easily. Hence, we have the two offices (instead of eight) of Morning and Evening Prayer. All the materials of these offices were drawn from the older ones, though only Scriptural elements were admitted. The Psalter was arranged to be read through once a month, and the Old Testament once, the New Testament thrice, a year.

These offices have proved themselves very popular in our tradition, and rightly so. They are a daily means of corporate devotion of praise, instruction, and prayer offered to the glory of God and the edification of the people. By them the Church is tremendously enriched in its devotion to God and in knowledge of his Word. Their value is in direct proportion to: (1) the frequency and regularity with which one participates in them; and (2) the capacity of the worshipper to meditate fruitfully upon the word of God. They contain all the elements necessary in a complete act of worship (other than sacramental), and except for the Absolution they do not require the presence of an ordained ministry. Lay people can say them among themselves, in family groups, or even read them daily as part of their private devotions (thus "praying with the Church").

It must always be remembered that the basic substance of the offices is the ordered reading of Holy Scripture, in

Cranmer
+ M.E.P.

the framework of praise, and with full use of the Psalter. It is to the Psalter that we now turn for the remaining remarks of this chapter.

The Psalms have the unique distinction of serving as the hymnal of two great religions, Judaism and Christianity; and of having outlived most other hymns and acts of praise in these two religions. Two reasons for their remarkable survival in constant use may be given:

- (a) They express the basic religious experiences of man in terms that the average worshipper can easily grasp.
- (b) They contain the two notes which are absolutely essential to worship: sincerity of expression and absolute trust in God.

The Psalms speak to every mood of the worshipper who stands in the presence of God: joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, health and sickness, love of worship and of fellowship, and the longings of loneliness and exile. So honest are the psalmists that they do not hide their bitterest feelings of complaint and of hatred. At least the psalmists never try to hide or conceal anything from God, however praiseworthy or blameworthy.

Though not all of the Psalms were used in the public worship of the Jews, it is best to consider the Psalter as basically a hymn-book. Its history is almost impossible to recover, for there are few indications that make it possible to date the Psalms with precision. It is timeless in a true sense. The Psalms probably underwent much revision in the course of time, and some of them may betray very ancient material side by side with relatively late material. The book is the result of the combination of various collections, with much editing. But its contents seem to have been fixed by the end of the second century B.C.

It is generally admitted now that most of the Psalms were composed for cultic use, whether of individuals or of the community as a whole. We know little of their use in pre-exilic times. But in the post-exilic temple, they were rendered by the choirs of Levites, at the time of the sacri-

fices, and accompanied by an orchestra. Certain Psalms were associated with the festivals, notably Psalms 113-118, known as the Great or Egyptian *Hallel*. These were Alleluia psalms, that is, psalms with the refrain of "Hallelujah". Possibly our Lord and his disciples sang them at the Last Supper. In any event, these Alleluia psalms are the only direct link between the Jewish use of the Psalter in worship and the Christian use. For the Alleluia psalms have throughout the history of the Church been associated with Easter Week.

We cannot expect to find in the Psalms many doctrines and conceptions that are basic to the Christian faith. Taken literally, the Psalter is incomplete, so far as it is an expression of the Christian faith. The belief in life after death, for example, has almost no expression in the Psalter. And, of course, many of the vindictive passages in the Psalms, if taken literally, are not suitable for Christian worship. Why, then, does the Church use the Psalms so much—in fact, the entire Psalter in its daily offices, and in other rites of its liturgy?

The reason is simply this: the Psalter was the devotional book used by our Lord himself and by his disciples. As Christians, we worship God through the Psalms because our Lord did so. We seek to pray them, and sing them, as he did. There are constant references in the Gospels to our Lord's knowledge of the Psalms. Above all, they comforted him as he hung in agony on the Cross.

But more than this, our Lord viewed the Psalms, no less than the prophets, as a book foretelling his own life and mission. He applied the Psalter as a prophecy to himself. We have an unmistakable indication of this in his citation of a passage in Psalm 118, at the conclusion of his parable of the wicked husbandmen, in which it is very clear that he intended his listeners to apply this prophecy to himself. He also discussed with the Jewish leaders the nature of his Messiahship in an argument over the interpretation of Psalm 110. And, according to St Luke's Gospel, after his Resurrection, he explicitly listed the Psalms along with the Law and the Prophets as giving testimony to him-

(1)
X
the
Psalms

Foretell
X's before
Mission

a.

b.

c.

self—testimony which his disciples were to give in their preaching of the gospel throughout the world.

The New Testament gives us therefore the basis for the Christian interpretation of the Psalms in our use of them in worship. This method of interpretation is generally called allegorical, and it has been much attacked by the proponents of strict historical criticism. It is true that allegorical methods have been much abused, from the days of the Fathers down to our own. It is an easy device for reading into any passage of Scripture whatever the interpreter wants to find there. But if the Psalms express the corporate hopes of the people of God, it is surely possible to see these hopes as realized in Christ, and so to read the Psalms in the light of his fulfilment. For the Christian, the Psalms speak of:

1. Christ himself, speaking to God,
2. Christ himself, speaking to his Church,
3. The Church, speaking to Christ.

- a. In this way the vindictive elements in the Psalms become related to the spiritual foes and enemies, both those that brought our Lord to his Cross, and those that continue to war against the Church. And the victories celebrated in the Psalms (though they may originally have been actual military victories of Jewish leaders) become, in a Christian context, the victories of Christ in his Incarnation and in his Body, the Church.
- b.

The earliest use of the Psalms was in the Eucharist. It is possible that their early use in the Eucharist was more as a lesson book—a prophecy—than as a chant book. They were employed at significant moments in the Eucharist, usually as an accompaniment to certain ceremonial actions:

- Introit—entrance of the ministers.
- Gradual—the procession to the pulpit for the Gospel.
- Offertory—the procession of the people with their gifts.
- Communion—the procession of the people to receive communion.

By skilful choice of verses, the rich wealth of the Psalter was thus made to give a devotional commentary upon the Church's acts of worship, linked to the themes of the Christian Year.

In the Daily Offices, the Psalms have generally been read "in course", that is, consecutively, or in large blocks. This gives a variety of moods and expressions, and with the varying lessons provides many insights for meditation. But it can become wooden and mechanical, if one does not give some study to the Psalms one by one.

Usually the recitation of the Psalms is made antiphonally, by two groups or choirs, reciting them verse by verse. This is a practical way, but it does not always make the best sense of a psalm. This general character of Hebrew poetry is what is called parallelism: each half verse is parallel to the other, either by repeating the thought or by stating a contrasting thought. But there are also in many Psalms real stanza divisions, and some refrains. The variety of patterns of poetic structure in the Psalms is amazing, and much freshness can be given to their recitation if one is aware of these varieties.

Doubtless the Psalter will continue from generation to generation to serve as the "prayer of the Church", outlasting all our Christian hymnals, not to speak of the changing fashions of Biblical criticism. For it is the communal worship of all the people of God—whose hopes of redemption look to God for even greater fulfilment.

SHEPHERD: THE LITURGY AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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